

Minutes of the regular Board of Finance Meeting
Town Hall – Jan. 11, 2016 – 7 p.m.

Members present: Justin Donnelly, Ryan Anderson, Chris Childs, Ann Huntington Mickelson, Brian Kost, Eric Harrington, alternates: Tracy. Eccles, J. Michael Stevens, John Sullivan

Also present: First Selectman Mack, Treasurer Davidson, Director of Finance Cerrato

Chairman Justin Donnelly welcomed all to the January 11, 2016 Board of Finance Meeting.

He called for Citizen Comment: Dave Gauthier, Phelps Road, West Suffield, commented that the Budget should show statutory items,(as required by the State), be listed and so noted in separate line item, so that during the budget process, both the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance know which items are statutory. If this was done, then at the Town budget meeting, taxpayers would know what line items are funded and those items which are statutory.

Minutes of the Regular Meeting, Dec. 14, 2015 and Tri-Board Meeting minutes, Dec. 7, 2015: Mr. Childs moved the minutes of the Dec. 14 and the minutes of the Tri-Board be amended as noted:

Dec. 14, 2015 – p. 1 last paragraph, the benchmark figure of 2.5% should be reviewed.

Mr. Child will review the figure.

p.2 – 3rd paragraph, delete “in U.S.Bonds” , paragraph 5, change Ms. to Mr. Anderson, Dec. 7, 2015 – change phrase, 3 paragraphs from the end of the page, to read, “with all Boards on the prioritization of capital projects.” Add phrase to a process, to read “to determine priorities that will be able to be budgeted for given future capital constraints”. Mr. Anderson seconded the amended motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote. Mr. Childs moved to change the agenda so that the two Executive Sessions (13) to be followed by Executive Session (15). Mr. Anderson seconded. The motion was unanimous.

Authorize and recommend to Town Meeting, \$500,000 Capital Project for School Security Grant -

Chairman Donnelly noted that the BoF now had documentation regarding the School Vestibule Remodeling and a breakdown of the costs and expenses supplied by the architects and it was noted that this was done in 2014. He stated that there may be increases in the cost due to time factor. It was noted that the work must be completed by June 30, 2016 in order to get an approximately 50% reimbursement. Mr. Hoff, School Business Manager, reviewed the details of the items needed. This is a Homeland Security grant, not an educational grant. Questions were asked if this was not completed per the grant timeline could it be submitted to the State School Building Construction and be eligible for a grant from that source. Mr. Kost asked is the Spaulding School roof complete? Mr. Hoff answered that the work was to be done after June 30th.The

Chairman of the Board of Education, Jeanne Gee, then invited all the BoF, and other Town Officials to ride a bus (sent by the BoE for pickup at the Town Hall, January 28 at 7 p.m. to view the status of all the schools' capital needs. This is the BOE meeting with ACCE to discuss capital projects being submitted by the BOE for budget consideration. Mr. Kost moved that the BoF approve the \$500,000 School Vestibule project to Town Meeting, subject to funding \$250,000 from Unassigned Fund Balance and the remaining \$250,000 by transferring \$250,000 from the Spaulding School Roof Repair project in the current budget. Mr. Anderson seconded. Discussion followed. Mr. Donnelly noted that all full members were present; there is no need to appoint alternates. He called for the vote and the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Treasurer's General Fund Investment Income Analysis 7/1/15 to 6/30/16- Treasurer Christine Davidson briefly reviewed the written report, and noted that the Town might make the budgeted goal of \$30,000.

Approval to split Administrative Assistant to the Board of Selectmen to two positions at 17.5 hours per week -

The First Selectman stated she is here because she has in her budget a full time Administrative Assistant; She would like to split this position in to two positions at 17.5 hours per week which means no benefits, just straight salary. Mr. Childs moved that the BoF approve to split the full time Administrative Assistant to the Board of Selectmen, to be divided into 2 part time positions 17.5 hours per week. Ms. Mickelson seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Capital Non Recurring Expenditure Fund Investment Recommendations (CNRE) – tabled from the December Meeting

Mr. Childs explained in detail, the current portfolio and noted the proposed changes. \\ Mr. Childs moved to approve the adoption of the proposed portfolio for the CNRE Fund, as recommended by the investment advisor, Wells Fargo; Mr. Kost seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

To authorize a pay increase for the Police Captain - The First Selectman reported that in conjunction with the Police Chairman, Keven Amata, of the Police Commission, requests that the BoF vote in favor of increasing the Captain's salary be from \$93,810.20, as budgeted for FY 15/16, to \$95,000, for the newly appointed Captain. The BoS voted at the January 6, 2016 meeting unanimously to approve the increase of approximately \$1,200. It has been requested that the salary increase begin in this budget year. Ms. Mickelson moved to approve the salary increase for Captain Brown as requested from \$93,810.20 to \$95,000; Mr. Childs seconded. Mr. Donnelly called for the vote: Ms. Mickelson and Mr. Childs voted in the affirmative (2) and there were 4 votes against the motion. Voting against the motion: Mr. Donnelly, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Kost, Mr. Harrington. The motion failed.

Approval of Town Clerk's Fund – Town Clerk Dunai was present and reviewed past documents that Public Act 00-146 established a fee of three dollars to be collected by the Town Clerks on land record recording for the express purpose of historic preservation.

All monies collected must be used for this purpose. Conn. Gen Stat. 7-34a (d) states “one third of the amount paid for fees pursuant to this subsection shall be retained by town clerks and used for the preservation and management of historic documents.” Conn. Gen Stat. 11-8k (b) This states that if the Public Records Administrator finds that any grant awarded pursuant to this section is being used for other purposes or to supplant a previous source of funds, the Administrator may require repayment. The intent was that money collected to be used for preservation and management of historic documents. This money should not become part of the operating budget of the municipality. If the money was not spent in previous years it should still be available to the town clerk. Funds have been going into the General Fund. Suffield does not have a special Fund for this money. Therefore, we need to create a new special fund. She reviewed the total of funds that should have been placed in this fund. This had been brought to the Board of Selectmen 11/19/2014. Now the Town Clerk’s Office is collecting \$1,800 per month. Mr. Kost moved that the BoF establish a new Special Revenue Fund, specified as the Town Clerk’s Dollar Fund, to account for the fees as designated by State Statute; Mr. Anderson seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Mr. Donnelly stated we need to transfer \$91,419 into this fund, and where does that money come from. Mr. Kost moved that the BoF transfer \$91,419 from the Contingency account in to the newly established Town Clerk’s Fund; Mr. Childs seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote

Approval to submit an Assistance to Firefighters Grant application – Chief Chuck Flynn, Fire Chief of the Suffield Fire Department requests approval to apply for a micro grant not to exceed \$25,000 with a 5% cost share. If successful, the department would purchase two Thermal Imaging Cameras, one E hydraulic rescue ram and two multi gas meters. This equipment would replace older technology, which is expensive to repair and have exceeded their life expectancy. If awarded a grant, the Town’s cost of approximately \$1,250.00 could be absorbed by the Fire Department’s current operating budget. Mr. Anderson moved to approved the request of the Fire Department to apply for a micro grant not to exceed with a 5% cost share. Mr. Kost seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Approval to submit grant applications to Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) for Babb’s Beach and Hilltop Farm in the amount of \$250,000 each Mr. Patrick McMahon explained the request for grant submittal approval. The request is to submit an application to STEAP, for \$250,000 for site improvements to the Babbs Beach Recreation Area. The project would entail improved access to the beach area, gravel parking areas, new walkways and beach restoration.

The other request is to submit another application to STEAP for \$250,000 for installation of a fire suppression system and other life safety improvements in the large dairy barn as part of the Hilltop Farm Barn Restoration. The lack of a second egress and a working fire suppression system currently prevents Hilltop from having public programs and events in the Barn in the barn.

There is a required \$25,000 match for the Babbs Beach Improvements which would need to come from Town funds or donations. The First Selectman stated that we have neglected this Town property for decades. It is time we start paying attention to this property. Hilltop would also have a match of \$25,000 that would be covered by Friends of the Farm at Hilltop.

The Board raised the question: Could we use this grant application for another project, such as Community Center. This was discussed at length.

The First Selectman noted that Hilltop is an icon of Suffield, representative of Suffield being a town of farms and farmland preservation. Hilltop also manages some of the Town's open space.

Mr. Stevens stated he would rather the STEAP money would go to bathrooms at Babbs Beach.

Mr. McMahon noted that the Board of Selectmen had approved these applications. And the applications are done. The grant submissions are due on Friday, which would not give much time to make any changes to the grants discussed tonight.

This grant would allow the Town to open up the beach for use by the residents stated the First Selectman.

Mr. Donnelly noted that obviously there should be better communication between this Board, BoS, ACCE, and Mr. McMahon when choosing projects for STEAP grants, and applications well in advance of application time.

Motion: Mr. Childs moved that the BoF approve the STEAP grant application to be submitted of \$250,000 for the restoration of the Babbs Beach area; Ms. Mickelson seconded. First Selectman Mack and the Treasurer spoke in strong support of this application.

Vote: Voting in favor: Childs, Mickelson, Donnelly

Against: Kost, Harrington and Anderson. A tie vote fails.

Motion: Mr. Anderson moved that we apply for the \$500,000 STEAP grant to used for the purpose of the Bridge Street School. Mr. Kost seconded. Discussion followed.

Vote: Childs, Donnelly, Mickelson voted in against.

In favor: Anderson, Kost, Harrington. A tie vote. The motion failed.

Motion: Mr. Childs moved that the BoF approve \$250,000 for the Babbs Beach restoration (STEAP application): Ms. Mickelson seconded. Vote:

In favor: Childs, Donnelly, Mickelson, Kost,,: Against: Harrington, Anderson, The motion was approved. By a 4 to 2 vote.

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Motion: Ms. Mickelson moved that the BoF approve the grant application for \$250,000 for the Hilltop Farm Barn Restoration; and that the Friends of the Farm would fund the match. Mr. Childs seconded. Ms. Davidson spoke strongly in favor of this motion. The Hilltop Friends of the Barn also manages the Open Space that does belong to the Town. .
Vote: in favor, Childs, Mickelson, Donnelly, Kost, Harrington ; 5 to 1 Against: Anderson.
The vote was approved.

Mr. Kost stated we should have more time to review these applications before they come to the BoF for Review. Mr. Donnelly has spoken to Mr. McMahon regarding the timing of the application in the past.

The Chairman, advanced the Agenda item 16(Approval of Emergency Management Director (EMD) Agreement with SVAA) to follow agenda item #11 by a vote in favor by the BoF.

Approval of EMD Agreement with the SVVA – Dr. Wakefield stated that we are proposing that Art Groux, the Suffield Volunteer Ambulance Association’s Chief, to become the Emergency Management Director for a stipend of \$5,000 in addition to the contract that we have with the SVAA. The previous EMD was part time and was paid a stipend of approximately \$25,000. This would be a savings of \$20,000.

The First Selectman commented that she realized that this was a separate position, and paid a high stipend. She took a closer look and went to the Homeland Security EM meetings and realized that this is usually a stipend position and was held usually the Police Chief or Ambulance Chief. The two chiefs agreed with the appointment of Art Groux, Ambulance Chief and that he was very well qualified. The Town is also looking into leaving the Code Red alert system and join Everbridge , the State’s system, at no cost to the Town, for a savings of \$6,000. There is a budget for the equipment for EMD (approximately \$7,000), and it will be reviewed. In the future, the Town could apply for a Homeland Security Grant program which could fund equipment, etc.

The BoF had a detailed job description of the EMD Director and also had a copy of a proposed Memorandum of Understanding for the Appointment of Emergency Management Director for the Town of Suffield in their board packets. The previous director is no longer employed with Suffield. The new EMD will be paid beginning January 1- June 30, a total of \$2,500. Mr. Childs moved that we approve the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as proposed and presented and to transfer \$2,500 from the EMD’s budget to the SVAA budget. Ms. Mickelson seconded. Mr. Donnelly called for the vote. The vote was approved by unanimous vote.

Authorization to utilize \$138,000 in Local Capital Improvement Program grant funds to Town Center Fiber Extension Project and recommend to Town Meeting. Funding to come from unassigned Fund Balance After a detailed explanation by Mr. McMahon of his memo of January 7 and discussion, Mr. Kost moved to table the item and include it in the 2016-17 ACCE budget; Mr. Anderson seconded. The motion was approved by a 4 to

2 vote. Voting against was Mr. Anderson, Mr. Kost, Mr. Harrington and Mr. Donnelly. Voting for was Mr. Childs and Ms. Mickelson.

Approval to submit a Responsible Growth and Transit Oriented Development Grant
Mr. McMahon noted that this is a new grant program, and the maximum grant amount is \$2 million. Matching funds will boost application scoring. Applications are due by February 4, 2016. The Town is exploring the possibility of acquiring 123 Austin Street for use as the Town's highway facility. Potential developers of Ffyer Place consistently point to the presence of the highway garage as an impediment to their moving forward with redevelopment projects. The property has been evaluated by the Director of Public Works and Highway Superintendent and with some modifications would serve the Town's needs. We would direct grant funds to the relocation of the highway department, etc.

Mr. Anderson moved that the Board of Finance approve the submission of a Responsible Growth and Transit-Oriented Development Grant application in the amount of \$2 million for the possible relocation of the highway garage facility and to refer this item to Town Meeting. Mr. Childs seconded. The motion was approved by a 5 in favor vote; and 1 vote against the motion. Mr. Harrington voted against.

Executive Session – Personnel Issue – Settlement Agreement - Captain Huntley
Mr. Kost moved to enter Executive Session to discuss a personnel issue; Mr. Childs seconded. By unanimous vote, the meeting was voted into Executive Session at 8:47 p.m. All persons left the room except the Town Officials and the Board of Finance. At 9:00 p.m., the meeting entered Open Session. No formal action taken.

Executive Session - Real Estate Negotiations
Mr. Kost moved to enter Executive Session to discuss real estate negotiations. \ By unanimous vote, the meeting was voted into Executive Session at 9:02 p.m. At 9:16 p.m., the meeting entered Open Session. No formal action was taken.

Chairman's update - Mr. Anderson and I attended a BoE budget meeting; The Superintendent's budget reflects a 3.8% increase. Mr. Donnelly noted that there is a 10% reduction in the enrollment since 2010. The proposed increased staff was noted; but it understood that their budget review is still ongoing, department by department, and the BoE has not formally voted on a proposed budget.

Finance Director –Deborah Cerrato, reported that the Town did get second cut from the State, approximately \$984. She reviewed the Revenues and Expenses through December 31 and responded to all questions. Mr. Kost asked where does Suffield stand in the matter of being reimbursed for the High School. Ms. Cerrato stated she was not exactly sure. The last discussion with the Bill Hoff was that he responded to the audit from the State Department of Education – School Building Grants and included additional explanations for the items that were being denied in the audit. Mr. Kost asked for a report on the status of the school reimbursement and or audits for the next meeting.

First Selectman's update

Ms. Mack noted new bond financial advisors have been hired. She is having a Tri-Board meeting Wednesday, Jan. 13 at 7 p.m. at the SVAA. The bond counsel will be there. This meeting will be discussing the time line for approved capital projects. She is scheduling budget reviews for the departments. She has reviewed the salaries for the executives and noted she does not like the “across the board” raises for all; she will review the salaries and begin to make them equitable. She attended a CCM Municipal Training Workshop on Municipal Budgets, along with her 2 new Administrative assistants and she noted the Town needs to prepare a CAFR – Comprehensive Annual Financial Report instead of the annual audit. __This comprehensive document is needed for the bonding and rating process. The Town’s current bond rating is good. She stated that she will be updating job descriptions in the next year.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Bobbie C. Kling, Secretary

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